Collective Bargaining Seen Dead Letter in Coal, Steel Industries

Employer Can't Sit Down With Own Employes Due to Big Union Rule

By David Lawrence

When President Truman, at a private dinner here the other night, told 200 business men that he didn't see much sense to the coal and steel strikes, he was expressing the opinion, too, of persons in all walks of life.

But when the President advised employers to sit down and work out solutions of their problems with their employes, he was not discussing present-day labor-management relations. For no employer today in the large industries may sit down to talk things over with his own employes. He sits down only with a professional group of representatives, who do not themselves work for any employer. That has been the law of the land ever since the Wagner Act was passed.

With industry-wide bargaining, as it is practiced today in the steel industry, for example, one union calls a strike affecting many employers. Negotiations are carried on with one of the large companies first, and, if there is a disagreement there, the strike is called in many other companies.

Thus collective bargaining is a dead letter in the steel industry so far as a large number of companies are concerned. They must await the outcome of negotiations between the United States Steel Corp. and the Steelworkers' Union.

Union Regulates Output.

One big union dominates the coal-mining industry. Here the employers are grouped by geographical sections, but the chief of the miners' union insists on industry-wide arrangements.

Employers are forbidden to make agreements with each other with respect to the amount of production they will furnish the country and thus affect the price by means of artificial scarcity. But the miners' union regulates at will the amount of production that may be done.

The employers in the coal industry cannot sit down with their own employes, as the President suggested, because collective bargaining, as established under the Wagner Act and confirmed under the Taft-Hartley Act, requires the employer to deal only with the union officers or spokesmen. There is no way by which an employer can negotiate directly with his own employes without being subjected to charges of an "unfair labor practice" and a possible court injunction ordering him to cease such a practice.

Also, under the present law, there is an obligation on both parties to bargain in good faith. In the coal negotiations recently, the employer group reported that for several weeks it was unable to learn what the demands were. Also the principals representing the miners stayed away from the negotiations for long periods of time, or participated in them in such a way as to preserve only the fiction that meetings were taking place. There has been little bargaining.

What It All Means.

What it all means is that when either side makes up its mind that an agreement is not possible, economic power is relied upon to bring concessions from one side or the other.

As matters stand today in the steel strike, a settlement there will be of little value unless coal is available with which to start the steel mills going again at full capacity. So, until progress toward a settlement of the coal controversy is made, the negotiations on the steel front will be listless.

The country, however, cannot afford a tie-up such as would ensue if both coal and steel strikes last several weeks more. The pressure on the administration to do something is growing. What that "something" can be is not clear as yet.

The provisions of the Taft-Hartley Act might be invoked to require the coal miners to return to work while a governmental fact-finding board seeks to resolve the issues. If this happens, it is likely that negotiations to settle the steel strike would be accelerated.

In the case of steel, the differences between the parties are really not insurmountable. But until Philip Murray, head of the steelworkers, gets through with his battle with the Communist wing at the CIO convention next week, it is not probable that any negotiations in earnest to settle the strike will be begun. All the efforts of mediators to date have been fruitless, because of the CIO convention problems. It is curious how the long hand of Russia reaches into America's industrial situation and complicates it.

This Changing World

French Farmers Seem Reluctant to Replace Animals With ECA Tractors

By Constantine Brown

STRASBOURG, France (By Airmail). — Traveling through some of the agricultural areas which lie between Pas de Calais in Northern France and the rich eastern farming lands on the Rhine, one does not see more than a dozen tractors in use.

Constantine Brown.

The Economic Co-operation Administration's public relations service emphasizes in its pamphlets and other material the importance of providing the Europeans with as much motorized farm equipment as possible. It is essential, they say, that under the Marshall Plan we should send tractors here, not only to increase the farm output of Western Europe but also to build up a permanent market for American farm equipment.

Once European farmers become accustomed to these motorized implements, it is said, they will continue to order them from the United States or they will be built in the French plants of American concerns after the Marshall Plan goes out of existence and Europe once more becomes self-sufficient. This may be good theory, but for the present we do not know how it will work out.

The majority of French farms are small, hardly more than 60 acres. The farmers have diversified production, including wheat, barley, oats, beets and other vegetables. For many years they have been using heavy Percheron horses, and oxen in certain sections of Eastern France, for the work done in America by tractor. Even today the French farmers are reluctant to replace their animals with motorized equipment, which to start with is more expensive and does quick, but not proportionately remunerative, work.

Advantage of Horse and Oxen.

The advantage of the horse and oxen in the minds of French farmers is that they eat what is grown on the farm while the tractor requires gasoline, which must be imported from abroad and costs about 58 cents a gallon. Fertilizer is provided by farm animals, not by tractors. Furthermore, the Percheron mare gives birth to a foal each year, which either can replace an older animal or can be sold at a good profit.

Finally, French farmers in most cases are grouped in villages and do not live in isolated farm houses. If the village has no veterinarian there is at least some elderly man who knows what to do when a horse becomes ill. Sometimes it is necessary to travel many miles to find a mechanic who can handle the ailments of a motor, and he charges a pretty heavy fee.

One of the men attached to the United States Information Service, whose job in this district is to tell American visitors the effects of ECA on the rural French population, showed me the rich farmland around Strasbourg. He was explaining how happy the farmers were to have their tractors to relieve them of the job of plodding behind a slow-moving plow. "You will see," he said, "to what good uses they are putting their tractors."

As we moved down the road we saw at a distance a number of heavy farm carts. "You see," he said, "in the past these were propelled by horses or oxen. Now they are pulled, sometimes several at a time, by an American tractor."

Not a Single Tractor.

I was happy to have an opportunity to see this change, but as we approached the carts my friend's face fell. The four heavily laden carts were pulled by nice-looking, slow-moving Percherons. We traveled the better part of an hour and saw great activity in the fields. But the antiquated Percherons and the more placid oxen had not yet been displaced by the tractor.

My USIS friend decided to show me a typical Marshall Plan farm. It was pleasant to look at. The ancient houses were freshly painted. The villagers looked plump and happy — unquestionably the result of the rich and excellent Alsatian food which is plentiful.

In the old farm yard there were plenty of light and heavy carts—some had come to France under the Marshall Plan — as well as new harrow discs and cultivators. But we saw not a single tractor.

I did not press for an explanation. We talked about America, the political situation and the fact that this province of France was only seven hours from the Russian zone of Germany. Casually he confessed that a few tractors find their way into the countries behind the Iron Curtain. Some greedy farmers, apparently after tinkering with a tractor for several weeks, find a buyer who is looking for motorized equipment for collective farms across the forbidden border. And since the farmer can sell his equipment he sees no reason why he should not revert to the horse and oxen of his ancestors.

On the Other Hand

Strange Reward Proposed for Man Who Always Has Been Good Soldier

By Lowell Mellett

It is a tough problem now, the national military establishment; a tough problem for the Secretary of Defense and the President. How will the mess made by the admirals, aided and abetted by some important members of Congress, be cleaned up? How will confidence in our plans for national defense be restored, now that those plans, including some intended to be secret, have been carried on the four winds to all parts of the earth?

Lowell Mellett.

It is said that some heads will roll at the Pentagon, meaning that certain ranking naval officers will be removed from their present places and others named to take over their work. Finding those others will not be easy, when it is considered that they will need to be men capable of bringing the Navy completely into line with the thinking of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

That means they must be men having the full respect and loyalty of the Navy in all its echelons—just as the group of trouble-making admirals have seemed to have it. There is no question of the Navy's loyalty to the officers who have undertaken to blow the defense program apart and reassemble it to their own satisfaction. These are the Navy's authentic heroes and their views are the Navy's views. Any successors acceptable to the secretary will be looked on with suspicion. And such successors may find it difficult indeed to restore and maintain the Navy's morale.

Someone Has to Make Decisions.

But it must be done if we are to have a unified defense organization, which all agree, we must have. Quite apart from the need to operate as a single team, there is the fact, believe it or not, that only so much money can be found, even in this rich country, for national defense. Somebody has to make the decisions as to the best use of that money and it cannot be one of the services acting independently of the others.

So Secretary Johnson has on his hands a problem just about as ornery as ever confronted a responsible Government official. He is aware that the breaches of ordinary discipline of which high naval officers have been guilty cannot be overlooked. But any action he may take must have for its primary purpose the achievement of real unification, that will-o'-the-wisp that eluded his predecessor and that will continue to baffle him as long as discipline is not enforced at the top level of the services as well as the lower levels.

Bradley Ouster Sought.

It is now being said by some that Secretary Johnson must not only remove the present naval member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, but the chairman, Gen. Bradley, as well. The general, it is said, should not have allowed himself to become so angry at the tactics pursued by the naval officers; he should have been more gracious and forgiving. Now, it is said, their feelings are so hurt that he never will obtain their co-operation; somebody else should be given his job in order to soothe their feelings.

If the present situation is to be regarded as nothing more than a quarrel between the Army and the Navy there would be some merit in this suggestion. Mr. Johnson would have precedent for such a solution. When the quarrel between Mr. Johnson as Assistant Secretary of War and Harry Woodring as Secretary of War had reached the point where it could no longer be ignored, President Roosevelt ousted them both, even though he was more favorably inclined toward Johnson than toward Woodring.

Following this precedent, however, is little likely to promote the unification of the armed services. It is more likely to be regarded as victory for those opposed to unification and encouragement of continued revolt against over-all decisions that do not please them.

And it would be a strange reward for the man whose whole career has been that of the good soldier.

Honduras merchants are buying hand-to-mouth, awaiting lower American prices.

LOUIE —By Harry Hanan

Military Statesman

Japanese Like MacArthur on Theory Old-Men Rulers Are Not Ambitious

By Doris Fleeson

TOKYO (By Airmail). — An early directive, never repealed, to Gen. MacArthur from the Joint Chiefs of Staff told him that he had no direct concern with Japanese economic recovery beyond keeping the country above the disease and unrest level.

Doris Fleeson.

His job was to restore order and to democratize the whole Japanese feudal structure —political, social and economic. Comprehensive blueprints drafted principally by State Department economists were handed to him. They describe a democratic capitalism not yet wholly realized in our own country.

Historic work thus has been done here in a successful occupation for which the victor has so far picked up the check.

Economy Move Reflected.

Now Congress, business and other interested parties are talking a great deal about Japanese recovery—reviving her trade, and getting her off the backs of the American taxpayer. This demand that the occupation produce prosperity together with peace and democracy is, as any politician will feelingly agree, a horse of another color.

Undersecretary of the Army Tracy Voorhees has just been here for a look-see. He praised the occupation, and said no change from Army to civilian control was contemplated. He said also that Gen. MacArthur's civilian staff—the democratizers—would be cut about 20 per cent, because of budget cuts, but not the occupation troops.

This is the familiar pattern of the New Deal which the reforms initiated here closely resemble. Now comes the era when "recovery must follow reform." There are those who still feel reform has some distance to go and must be closely policed all the way lest the now obliging Japanese backslide.

The pressure for Japanese recovery reflects Congress' economy mood. There is also pressure by big business which is either pinched directly or fears the precedent of such wholesale anti-monopoly, anti-cartel reforms. Above all, and giving the other elements more room to maneuver, the increasing communization of the Orient now gives Japan a peculiar importance as an American foothold. It is argued that it is now more important to have Japan a going concern than it is to purify her completely.

It is a complex situation which will make increasingly greater demands upon Gen. MacArthur.

Crowds Still Bow.

The Japanese, who feared the worst and got a part of the best that America has to offer, all but venerate their deliverer. They have discovered that he had a Japanese grandmother (false, naturally) which in this country of ancestor worship is an accolade. Traffic no longer stops when he leaves his office, but the bowing crowds still gather. Japanese also like it that he is old; they approve of the old as rulers on the theory that they are no longer ambitious for themselves, but for a place in history.

He has been loyal to his people here and supported their efforts to implement the directives handed him; they return him an unusual fidelity and are eager to spare him any criticism. It is perhaps no very cynical asperity to suggest that some realize they could get someone very much worse to oversee political, social and economic moves.

It is interesting that a professional soldier should so successfully direct such an operation. The general says he never lived away from the sound of a bugle until he moved into the American embassy. But he takes an honored place among America's versatile new breed of military statesmen — Generals Marshall, Eisenhower, Bradley, Smith and Admirals Leahy and Kirk.

McLemore—

Hails GI Insurance Form for Simplicity

By Henry McLemore

I don't know the man's name, but he should have a monument.

Not a little ol' monument two or three hundred feet high, either, but a mile-high monument, with all the things that go with monuments, such as lions, horses, cherubims, and stout men and women brandishing swords, scattered about like soap flakes in a chain store.

Henry McLemore.

The man I am writing about is the man who devised the application blank for World War II GI's to fill in to get their Government insurance dividend.

For clarity and simplicity it is the greatest American document since Lincoln's Gettysburg Address. I prophesy that sometime it will be preserved under glass and key, and shown to citizens as the work of a man who, risking his all, dared violate the bureaucratic machinations of Washington, D. C., in the late 1940's.

Couldn't Believe His Eyes.

I couldn't believe my own eyes when I saw the application. When I first heard that we GI's were going to get a bonus for not being plugged for keeps, I pictured the application we would receive. A batch of papers heavy enough to break a burro's back, with 44,323 questions to be answered. Color of hair, shape of ears, name of great grandmother's first serious suitor, favorite cigarette, gasoline and toothache remedy, height, weight, and chest (expanded) size, middle initial of doctor who delivered you, doctor's favorite hobby, exact height of Mt. Everest, and exact length of time you can stay under water without coming up for air.

But the application was as simple as ABC. Just a small card with the minimum of questions. So few questions that a man could answer them with one dipping of his pen: Name, serial number, number of insurance policy, permanent address and branch of service.

Hero Refused to Budge.

I would be willing to bet that the man who devised the GI insurance dividend application has been fired, denied his civil rights, and ridden out of Washington to the hoots and jeers of 250,000 filing clerks. I can picture what his superiors said when he walked into their office and submitted this simple, sense-making, non-extra-work-making blank. They undoubtedly threw up their hands in horror at the very thought of doing something the easy way and ordered him to go back and, if necessary, take a year complicating the form.

But he obviously stood steadfast. In the tradition of the great pioneers he refused to budge. So let us honor him. Let all of us GI's chip in and erect for him an enduring memorial—one that will last through the years and keep his memory green.